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Introduction

WASH stands for water, sanitation and hygiene. Sanitation is preventing people from coming into contact with human excreta and other liquid wastes, and hygiene is practices that help maintain health and prevent disease. These three areas are interrelated and are often considered together. This is because the public health benefits can be maximised by considering them together rather than focusing on each area separately.

Water and sanitation, together with food and shelter, are the most important human needs. Inadequate safe water, a lack of sanitation and poor hygiene practices bring the danger of diarrhoea, cholera and other disease outbreaks. WASH services are important because they:

- provide safe water
- provide appropriate sanitation facilities
- promote good hygiene practices
- reduce environmental health risks
- allow people to live in good health, comfort, safety and dignity.

In 2015, the United Nations issued 17 goals for humankind to strive for. Called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the sixth goal aims for universal access to water and sanitation. Worldwide, one in three people do not have access to safe drinking water, two out of five people do not have a basic handwashing facility with soap and water, and more than 673 million people still practise open defecation (UN, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical importance of hygiene and adequate access to clean water for preventing the spread of disease. Hand hygiene saves lives and is one of the most effective actions to prevent infections, including the COVID-19 virus.

In this course you will learn how the different elements of WASH can combine to keep the people of Myanmar healthy by reducing their risk of disease.

This course is self-study which means you study on your own over a period of six weeks. Each week requires three hours of study, with a total study time of 18 hours. It is for school leavers who want to go on to higher education and other individuals who want to understand the key areas of WASH and improve WASH services for their communities.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are what you will know and be able to do after studying the course. They are divided into knowledge-learning outcomes, and skill-learning outcomes.

The knowledge-learning outcomes of the course are:

- describe the elements of WASH
- understand the different ways in which water is involved in the transmission of human diseases
- explain the differences between liquid and solid wastes and how they are managed
- appreciate the role of human values and behaviour in promoting hygiene
- describe the components of personal hygiene
- explain the basic hygiene requirements of different institutions.

The skill-learning outcomes of the course will help you:

- work independently
- analyse data
- manage time effectively
- take action as a WASH champion.

Course Content

The course is studied over six weeks, with a different study session introduced each week.

Study Session 1 Water Supply in Myanmar looks at the sources of water and considers the various ways water is used. It considers how water gets to consumers in cities, towns and villages in Myanmar and the seasonal and regional variability of water supply. Finally, it identifies the challenges involved in providing safe and adequate water for all Myanmar citizens.

Study Session 2 Water and Public Health looks at the importance of water for the human body and the different ways in which water is involved in the transmission of human diseases before looking at common diseases from unsafe water in Myanmar.

Study Session 3 Sanitation and Waste Management describes the similarities and differences between 'sanitation' and 'waste management' and introduces the 'sanitation ladder' and the 'waste hierarchy'. It describes the features of urban areas that influence sanitation and waste management and the current level of sanitation and waste management in Myanmar.

Study Session 4 Values and Behaviour for WASH describes the ways in which the social environment of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and traditions can affect human values and behaviour towards WASH practices. It gives examples of how positive or negative human values and behaviour concerning WASH practices can affect infectious disease transmission and the physical environment. It concludes by explaining why it is important to address economic factors and gender issues when devising a communication strategy to promote good WASH practices.

Study Session 5 Personal Hygiene describes the public health importance of personal hygiene and its components. It considers what are acceptable and poor personal hygiene practices and lists the critical situations for effective handwashing.

Study Session 6 Institutional Hygiene identifies the local institutions that require attention for hygiene explaining the public health importance of such institutions. Their basic hygiene requirements are considered, and you are invited to develop an action plan for the promotion of hygiene and sanitation in an institution of your choosing.

Assessment Strategy

Assessment involves a short quiz at the end of each study session to enable you to evaluate your understanding of the materials. You need to pass each of the six quizzes to pass the course. The pass percentage is 60%, and you can take each of the quizzes as many times as you want, although only your last attempt will be recorded.

The knowledge-learning outcomes will be assessed in these quizzes. There are also some questions in the text of each study session. These in-text questions encourage you to stop and think about what you have just learned. They do not count towards your final assessment. It is only the quizzes that count towards your final assessment.

The skill-learning outcomes will be achieved by completing the course as this will demonstrate that you can work independently and manage your time effectively. You will be asked to analyse data in the in-text questions, and we hope that you will also take some action as a WASH champion, although neither of these are assessed.

Getting started

Please go to **Study Session 1 Water Supply in Myanmar** to begin your study of the course.

Reference

United Nations, (2019) Sustainable Development Goals.

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>

(Accessed 27 December 2020).